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## **NATIONAL STUDY TO FOCUS ON LOUISIANA EDUCATION REFORMS**

**BATON ROUGE** -- Louisiana's new reform initiatives in elementary, secondary and postsecondary education will be the focus of a nationwide federally-funded case study, Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie and state Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard announced at a special press conference today (May 24).

Savoie described the study as a "welcomed opportunity to demonstrate to the rest of the nation the progress the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, or BESE, are making in reforming public education at all levels."

Louisiana is the only state in the Deep South to be selected for this national study which is being conducted by the national State Higher Education Executive Officers, or SHEEO, organization. The study will specifically highlight emerging state pre-kindergarten through university systems, or PK-16 systems, that have been designed to drive systemic education reforms.

Governor Murphy J. "Mike" Foster also was pleased with the news that Louisiana has been selected for this national study. "Education reform has been a top priority in my administration," Foster said. "It will be refreshing to see our initiatives to improve education used as a guide by other states."

State Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard said the education "reforms we've already initiated have yielded unprecedented improvements in student achievement, and we believe that our partnership with higher education will accelerate the results."

Louisiana was one of five states chosen from 40 states considered for selection to participate in the program. The other four are California, Illinois, Maryland and Rhode Island.

The three-year study, which begins in September, is part of the national education reform initiative “Building Statewide K-16 Systems for Student Success” sponsored by SHEEO with funding from four U.S. Department of Education programs, including Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs-GEAR-UP, HEA Title II-Teacher Quality Enhancement Program, Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers to Use Technology, and the National School-to-Work Office.

The goal of the joint SHEEO and U.S. Department of Education initiative is to build and strengthen connections across federal and state programs within each state through elementary, secondary and postsecondary education , or K-16, partnerships.

“While we understand that many programs are just beginning [in Louisiana],” said Esther Rodriguez, SHEEO associate executive director, “we are impressed with the various initiatives underway in Louisiana and believe that together they make up an integrated, comprehensive K-16 effort that could provide a model that other states may want to emulate.”

Conducting the study will be a 15-member team, consisting of staff from SHEEO and the U.S. Department of Education, senior state K-12 and postsecondary officials from across the country, and representatives from national education organizations such as the Education Commission of the States, the Southern Regional Education Board, the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education and The College Board.

The case study will focus on six areas:

- Early outreach programs -- Statewide efforts designed to inform, motivate and support elementary and secondary school students to encourage college participation.
- Student financial aid and other incentives -- Statewide programs designed to make college attendance more affordable and attractive.
- Teacher quality initiatives -- Statewide activities designed to improve teacher preparation, recruitment, induction, licensure, professional development or other efforts aimed at improving the quality of the teacher workforce.
- Curriculum development and assessment of learning -- Statewide efforts to align K-12 and postsecondary curriculum, standards, pedagogy, high school exit-college admissions and placement requirements.
- Data and accountability systems -- Development of statewide databases for K-12 and postsecondary education and the linkages between them; reporting systems in place that address student transition issues and student outcomes.

- Statewide leadership structures -- Existence of active, regular collaborative work at the state level between K-12 and postsecondary education leaders and agencies.

Louisiana's education reform efforts were driven by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality. Governor Foster formed the Blue Ribbon Commission in 1999 as a joint venture between the Board of Regents and BESE to study and make recommendations that would result in substantive reforms in elementary, secondary and postsecondary education. Its membership consisted of teachers, university faculty and administrators, school superintendents, business people, private citizens and legislators.

The commission had four major goals that focused on transforming how universities and school districts work together, how they recruit individuals to enter the teaching profession, what and how they teach teachers, and what they do to retain effective teachers once they enter the teaching profession.

To help monitor and continue these reforms, Louisiana private and public universities that have teacher preparation programs must form PK-16+ [pre-kindergarten through baccalaureate degree] advisory councils that will connect individual universities with school principals and classroom teachers, district superintendents, Department of Education personnel, corporate and community partners, and other leaders from kindergarten through 12th grade schools. So far, 19 councils have been formed statewide.

"This case study selection validates the hard work that many people have been doing to enhance the educational system in our state," Savoie said. "I am delighted that Louisiana's education reforms continue to draw national attention."